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ABSTRACT

Understanding organizational cultures offers important and useful insights for the professional communicator. The fastest-growing area of interest in the study of modern organizations and their behavior is that of organizational cultures. There are at least two specific ways to categorize and discuss these cultures. The first is to divide them into three distinct types, which reflect the various management and organizational philosophies traditionally followed in American companies: authoritarian/bureaucratic, compromise/supportive, and performance/innovative. The second is to use the categories provided by A. Kennedy and T. Deal, who considered five specific elements--business environment, values, heroes, rites and rituals, and cultural work--to classify corporate cultures as follows: macho/tough guy, work hard/play hard, bet your company, and process. Finally, an organizational cultural index test can identify both the type of organization in which a person works and the type of organization in which a person would like to work. (Tables illustrating the text and a copy of the Organizational Culture Index Questionnaire are included.) (DF)

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ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURES AND THE ROLE OF PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION

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ABSTRACT

Understanding organizational cultures offers important and useful insights for the professional communicator. This paper discusses the significant role of communication in the organizational culture and outlines the ideal types of behavior and communication existing in the excellent companies.

The various types of organizational cultures are examined from the categories of authoritarian, compromise, and performance and the four specific types analyzed in Deal and Kennedy's Corporate Cultures. Finally, a test is provided to assist the individual in determining the culture currently operating in a particular organization.

INTRODUCTION

The fastest-growing area of interest in the study of modern organizations and their behavior is organizational culture. Peters and Waterman's study, In Search of Excellence: Lessons From America's Best-Run Companies, offers the rationale for this interest. "Without exception, the dominance and coherence of culture proved to be an essential quality of the excellent companies" (Peters & Waterman, 1982, p. 75). Exactly what comprises excellent cultures will be developed in this paper, but the over-riding quality of all strong cultures lies in the communication patterns. Allan Kennedy, co-author of Corporate Cultures: The Rites and Rituals of Corporate Life, was recently asked what ingredient is needed to build strong corporate cultures.

> The answer, pure and simple, is through effective communication--to employees, customers, shareholders, public officials, and the public at large. The companies and organizations that do the best job thinking through what they are all about, deciding how and to whom these central messages should be communicated and executing the communication plan in a quality way invariably built a strong sense of esprit within their own organization and among the many constituents they serve. (Kennedy, 1983, p. 26)

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Interest in these strong cultures comes from a variety of pressures which are partially summarized by Pascale and Anthos in The Art of Japanese Management:

> Our managerial set is being challenged persistently on three fronts. First, we are challenged on the frontier of managerial practice, where even bigger doses of what we already do will yield diminishing returns. Something more is needed to get our organizations to run effectively. Second, we are challenged by shifting values within our society which lead people to expect different things from organizations and to seek different meaning from work itself. And, third, the competition is killing us. (Pascale & Anthos, 1981, p. 25)

From Pascale and Anthos' view, Western organizations have placed a great deal of faith and effort into the three Ss: Strategy, Structure, and Systems. These comprise the "hard" management techniques. These three perspectives lead to a fixation on individual glory and the joys of winning through intimidation. In contrast, the four soft Ss--Staff, Skills, Style, and Superordinate goals--have received a relative lack of emphasis. These last four elements are, in many ways, the essential aspects of a culture, and are the traditional "people" issues which are the cornerstone of what the professional communicator offers to an organization.

Surprisingly, many individuals are uncomfortable with the notion of studying something which cannot be easily quantified. At the same time, no one would deny the need to understand the culture of other countries before traveling abroad or before working with foreign executives. In an effort to keep from being an "Ugly American," major American companies such as IBM, Xerox, and Proctor and Gamble spend a great deal of time in training their employees in the codes of etiquette and local protocol to make their business trips go smoothly. Knowing how to "do as the Romans do when in Rome" is a logical means of preventing any unnecessary "faux pas" or gaffes. This same logic regarding understanding culture for travel abroad also applies to the communicator hoping to adapt effectively to an organization.

This paper will discuss the ideal types of communication behaviors outlined by Peters and Waterman. Based on this initial concept, the paper discusses how communication is used in the three general types of cultures: Authoritarian, Compromise, and Performance. From this broadened perspective, the specific types identified in Deal and Kennedy's (1982) Corporate Cultures are presented. Finally, a test of our own cultural understanding is provided with the goal of enhancing our own ability to prevent inadequate fits between our own needs and the culture we are addressing.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE EXCELLENT COMPANIES

The companies and industries surveyed by Peters and Waterman represent a broad range of organizations including high-technology companies such as Digital Equipment, consumer goods companies such as Proctor & Gamble, general industrial goods companies such as Minnesota Mining and Manufacturing (3 M), service companies such as Delta Air Lines, project management companies such as Bechtel, and resource-based companies such as Atlantic-Richfield (ARCO). The book identifies and discusses the qualities shared by these diverse organizations. In picking their sample of 62 companies, Peters and Waterman chose ones which had excellent financial performance to support the companies' "halo of esteem" in the business world. The organizations covered were measured by six long-term measures of superiority which included growth and wealth creation over a 20-year period. They excluded banks since the traditional heavy regulation of banks prevented Peters and Waterman from applying the 20-year standard. Overall, their "major concern was and is how big companies stay alive, well, and innovative" (Peters & Waterman, 1982, p. 25).

Throughout their analysis, Peters and Waterman refer to the intensity of interactions between the various members of the successful companies. Using the term "fluidity," they see excellent companies responding well because they shun the traditional organizational structure. This "rich, informal communication" is the name of the game for these organizations.

> The nature and uses of communication in the excellent companies are remarkably different from those of their nonexcellent peers. The excellent companies are a vast network of informal, open communications. The patterns and intensity cultivate the right people's getting into contact with each other, regularly, and the chaotic/anarchic properties of the system are kept well under control simply because of the regularity of contact and its nature (e.g., peer versus peer in quasi-competitive situations). (Peters & Waterman, 1982, pp. 121-122).

Critical to the success of this communication is the use of the small group. "Small groups are, quite simply, the basic organizational building blocks of excellent companies" (Peters & Waterman, 1982, p. 126). Rather than the strict organizational building blocks made of the accepted structure, these small groups are based on flexibility and often take the form of task forces which have single purposes and, when finished, are disbanded. Rather than formal reports, actions are taken to resolve whatever difficulties were the reasons for the group's being formed in the first place.

Coupled with this overall belief in small groups is the policy of MBWA--Management By Walking Around. In the excellent companies, all of the management team believes in being involved with the activities of the members of the organization. Peters and Waterman conclude:

> The free-wheeling environments in which ad hoc behavior flourishes are only superficially unstructured and chaotic. Underlying the absence of formality lie shared purposes, as well as an internal tension and a competitiveness that makes these cultures tough as nails. (Peters & Waterman, 1982, p. 134)

On eight different characteristics, there are fundamental distinctions between traditional management and the excellent companies. A careful analysis of Table I shows the difference between the two. In general, organizations have allowed structure to become an end in-and-of itself and control to be the management technique most likely to be used. The excellent companies, because of their communication-behavior philosophy, contrast sharply. The excellent companies use communication as a primary tool in their program and perspective toward growth. The consistency between such a broad cross section of business types in their methods for using communication allows us to conclude that communication is a primary aspect accounting for their success.

CORPORATE CULTURES

However, all companies have a culture which is an organization's shared beliefs and values--its distinct identity. The facts which constitute the culture include the various procedures and activities which members regularly or occasionally perform. More than any other term, culture accurately describes the communication practices and behaviors which comprise an organization.

> Culture, as Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary defines it, is "the integrated pattern of human behavior that includes thought, speech, action, and artifacts and depends on man's capacity for learning and transmitting knowledge to succeeding generations." Marvin Bower, for years managing director of McKinsey and Company and author of The Will To Manage, offered a more informal definition--he described the informal cultural elements of a business as "the way we do things around here." (Deal & Kennedy, 1982, p. 125)

In order to understand more fully the other types of cultures which also should be considered, we must realize that "what we do" in an organization includes events "where individuals assign symbolic meaning [through] stories, myths, rituals, ceremonies, and nonverbal objects of the organizational cultural inventory" (Putnam, 1982, p. 199). In other words, the various cultures use some distinct means of communication.

There are at least two specific ways to categorize cultures. The first is to divide them into three distinct types which reflect, to some degree, the various management and organizational philosophies traditionally followed in American companies. These three types are Authoritarian/

Table I. Characteristics of the Excellent Companies

Comparison of America's Best-Run with the Traditional View

Best-Run Companies	Traditional Companies
1. A bias for action	1. A propensity to: "analyze it," "complicate it," "debate it"
2. Close to the customer	2. Use of frills, "Statue of Liberty Plays," specials
3. Productivity through people	3. Controlling cost by controlling people
4. Autonomy and entrepreneurship	4. Produce well--it's your job to do so and "be creative"
5. Hands-on, value driven	5. Remote control of activities, stress on structure
6. Stick to the knitting	6. Combining apples and oranges to obtain synergy
7. Simple form, lean staff	7. Layering, matrizing
8. Simultaneous loose-tight properties	8. Commitment to unbridled "actualizing" OR unbending controls

Adapted from Peter & Waterman, 1982.

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Bureaucratic, Compromise/Supportive, and Performance/Innovative. As Table II indicates, the three types reflect a distinct attitude toward individual and group behavior within the organization. The three groupings and their behavioral orientations indicate how each organization expects to have things done "around here." In a broad sense, these three groups allow us to look at particular organizations and decide what type of culture appears to be operating. This particular chart also allows the individual to begin to determine which culture might be most amenable to the organization's own needs and desires. To the degree the organization conforms to the cultural dictates of the chart, individuals will find it necessary to adapt effectively their own behavior to the cultural expectations.

A second way to divide the various organizations is to use the categories provided by Kennedy and Deal. They deal with corporations which would exclude some types of businesses and organizations. However, the rationale behind their groupings is extremely useful, and the behavioral manifestations are very enlightening. The four types of corporate cultures are Macho/Tough Guy, Work Hard/Play Hard, Bet Your Company, and Process.

In classifying their various cultures, Kennedy and Deal looked at five specific elements: business environment, values, heroes, rites and rituals, and cultural network. "The business environment is the single greatest influence in shaping a corporate culture" (Deal & Kennedy, 1982, p. 13). So, companies which orient themselves to specific customer needs will be very different from ones concerned with long-term growth or research and development. The values "are the basic concepts and beliefs of an organization; as such they form the heart of the corporate culture. Values define 'success' in concrete terms for employees--'if you do this, you too will be a success'--and establish standards of achievement within the organization" (Deal & Kennedy, 1982, pp. 13-14). Heroes personify the values of the culture and act as role models for the employees to follow. "These achievers are known to virtually every employee with more than a few months' tenure in the company. And they show every employee 'here's what you have to do to succeed around here'" (Deal & Kennedy, 1982, p. 14). The rites and rituals

> . . . are the systematic and programming routines of day-to-day life in the company. In their mundane manifestations--which [are] rituals--they show employees the kind of behavior that is expected of them. In their extravaganzas--which [are] ceremonies--they provide visible and potent examples of what the companies stand for. Strong cultures go to the trouble of spelling out, often in copious detail, the routine behavioral rituals they expect their employees to follow. . . . All of this information and all of these communication activities are bound together by the cultural network. As the primary (but informal) means of communication within an organization, the cultural network is

Table II. Types of Organizational Cultures

Behavioral characteristics of:	Authoritarian/Bureaucratic	Compromise/Supportive	Performance/Innovative
Basis for Decisions	Direct from authority	Discussion, agreement	Directions from within
Forms of control	Rules, laws, rewards, punishments	Interpersonal/group commitments	Actions aligned with self-concept
Sources of Power	Superior	What "we" think and feel	What I think and feel
Desired end	Compliance	Consensus	Self-actualization
To be avoided	Deviation from authorative direction	Failure to reach consensus	Not being "true to oneself"
Time perspective	Future	Near future	Now
Position relative to others	Hierarchial	Peer	Individual
Human Relationships	Structured	Group oriented	Individually oriented
Basis for growth	Following the established order	Peer group membership	Acting on awareness of self

> the "carrier" of the corporate values and heroic mythology. Storytellers, spies, priests, cabals, and whisperers form a hidden hierarchy of power within the company. Working the network effectively is the only way to get things done or to understand what's really going on. (Deal & Kennedy, 1982, pp. 14-15).

These five aspects form the basis for any culture. When they are done well, they provide the cultural base for a successful organization which provides practical meaning to people on and off the job. "A strong culture is a powerful level for guiding behavior; it helps employees do their jobs a little better" (Deal & Kennedy, 1982, p. 15). Deal and Kennedy point to two specific advantages of a strong culture: A "strong culture is a system of informal rules that spells out how people are to behave most of the time" (Deal & Kennedy, 1982, p. 15). In other words, people know the cultural requirements and are therefore less likely to violate the rules. Second, "a strong culture enables people to feel better about what they do, so they are more likely to work harder" (Deal & Kennedy, 1982, p. 16). Deal and Kennedy's conclusions fit clearly with the opening observation regarding the need to understand the territory in which we will be traveling. They conclude that "culture shock may be one of the major reasons why people supposedly 'fail' when they leave one organization for another. Where they fail, however, is not necessarily in doing the job, but in not reading the culture correctly" (Deal & Kennedy, 1982, p. 17). Implicitly and explicitly these are all statements about the communication which occurs in the organization.

> They also refer to communication and social rituals. The unwritten rules of personal communication, (let's call them "howdy" rituals) occupy an amazing amount of company time. But take them away and no one would know how to behave. They let people know where they stand, reinforce an individual's identity within the company, and set the tone for the way in which people relate to one another. (Deal & Kennedy, 1982, p. 64)

To further clarify the four cultures, Table III divides the characteristics by business environment; degree of risk; shared values; use of rituals and rites by the types of behavior expected; heroes; survivors and role models; attitude of employees; feedback on decision's success; and paradigms of corporate types.

One temptation is to combine the two divisions provided concerning cultures and to approach a particular industry with a preconceived notion regarding its cultural expectations. This procedure would be tantamount to arriving in New York City and assuming the rest of the United States was exactly the same since everyone is an American. The value of these classifications is in their "mapping-out" for us some potential issues which will then lead to a greater chance for successful cultural assimilation. Without a doubt, using these classifications is preferable to approaching an organization with an "Alice in Wonderland" perspective. However, Kennedy and Deal warn us:

Table III. Four Types of Corporate Cultures

Business environment	MACHO/TOUGH GUY	WORK HARD/PLAY HARD	BET YOUR COMPANY	PROCESS
Degree of risk	high risk, expensive outlays for risks	small risks	high risks, research and development	low risk
Represented by shared values of	youth, intensive pressure, fast pace, early rewards, "all or nothing"	fun and action, high level of activity which is everything	deliberateness, long-term, careful decision-making	technical perfection how things are done since what cannot be managed
Use of rites and rituals-types of behavior expected	extensive use, often superstitious, bonding meetings	contests, morale boosting conventions, language for sales	titles and formalities, business meetings	drawn-out meetings, memoes and reports that disappear
Heroes, survivors and role models	tough, internally competative, movers	super sales people, "never say die"	individuals persistent with correct decision and risk	employees who protect system and how
Attitude of employees	individualistic	center on customer; fill needs well	be right and be careful	conservative and trivial
Feedback on decision's success	quick	quick--by volume of sales	slow--future of the company	virtually none or negative
Paradigms of corporate types	construction cosmetics management consulting venture capital advertising television movies publishing sports entertainment	sales real estate computer companies automotive distributors any door-to-door sales mass consumer companies office equipment companies retail stores	capital goods mining and smelting large systems business oil companies investment banks architectural firms computer design companies actuarial end of insurance companies	banks insurance financial-service organizations large chunks of government utilities heavily regulated industries pharmaceuticals

Source: Deal & Kennedy, 1982, pp. 107-127.

> No one company fits perfectly into any of these molds, and different parts of the same organization will exhibit each of the four types of cultures. Still, most companies have overall tendencies toward one of the cultures because they are responding to the needs of the market place. (Deal & Kennedy, 1982, p. 125)

They point to three specific companies to underscore the point. Proctor and Gamble, Pepsi-Cola, and Bloomingdale's department store are all companies which would logically be Work Hard/Play Hard cultures but which are Macho/Tough Guy organizations actively pursuing competition both within the company and with competitors.

Knowing the type of culture you will be dealing with can be a great boon to effectively working within an organization. One means for learning about the culture is simply to become a member of the organization. Since getting things done is ultimately the goal of most members of an organization, careful observations will lead to enough information to make some preliminary decisions regarding the type of culture discussed. An individual might also read specific works which closely correlate to the type of organization referred to by Kennedy and Deal--e.g., Work Hard/Play Hard, Tracy Kidder's Soul of a New Machine (1981); Macho/Tough Guy, David Ogilvie, Confessions of an Advertising Man (1963); Bet Your Company, David Loth, Swope of GE (1958); and Process, Patrick Wright, On A Clear Day You Can See GM (1979).

ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE INDEX

Finally, an organizational cultural index test can identify the type of organization in which we would prefer to work. Actually, the test serves a dual function. It can be used to determine which type of organization we are currently working in, and it can also be used to decide which type of organization we would be most likely to be satisfied with. The first use of the test allows for better cultural assimilation for the individual already in the organization. The second use allows us to make some tentative links between our expectations and our ability to fit in a particular culture. Taking the test requires that what "is" must be the rule, not what "ought to be." The proper fit between the individual and the organization actually can occur through a high degree of cultural flexibility. At the same time, it is always useful to know the territory before we try to cross it. Tables IV and V illustrate the organizational-culture index. After you have totaled your score, you will have a rough indication of the type of corporate or organizational culture you are presently operating in or might be interested in becoming part of in the future. Since the choices include a 0 to 3 rating, you also have an approximation of the variations you see in your own needs. Few of us are strictly authoritarian/bureaucratic, compromise/supportive, or performance/innovative in our own working needs and perspectives. No organizational culture is likely to score a perfect 24 (the highest possible indication) on any one of the three characterizations, since all organizations tend to vary depending on the issue, department, and performance demands.

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Table IV. Organizational Culture Index Questionnaire

Instructions: Please circle a score from the scale below which most clearly corresponds with how you see your organization.

0=does not describe my organization
1=describes my organization a little
2=describes my organization a fair amount
3=describes my organization most of the time

(a)	risk taking	0	1	2	3
(b)	collaborative	0	1	2	3
(c)	hierarchical	0	1	2	3
(d)	procedural	0	1	2	3
(e)	relationships-oriented	0	1	2	3
(f)	results-oriented	0	1	2	3
(g)	creative	0	1	2	3
(h)	encouraging	0	1	2	3
(i)	sociable	0	1	2	3
(j)	structured	0	1	2	3
(k)	pressurized	0	1	2	3
(l)	ordered	0	1	2	3
(m)	stimulating	0	1	2	3
(n)	regulated	0	1	2	3
(o)	personal freedom	0	1	2	3
(p)	equitable	0	1	2	3
(q)	safe	0	1	2	3
(r)	challenging	0	1	2	3
(s)	enterprising	0	1	2	3
(t)	established, solid	0	1	2	3
(u)	cautious	0	1	2	3
(v)	trusting	0	1	2	3
(w)	driving	0	1	2	3
(x)	power-driven	0	1	2	3

Table V. Organizational Culture Index Analysis

Authoritarian/ Bureaucratic profile:	add scores for:	d____
		c____
		j____
		l____
		n____
		t____
		u____
		x____
	TOTAL:	____
Compromise/ Supportive profile:	add scores for:	a____
		f____
		g____
		k____
		m____
		r____
		s____
		w____
	TOTAL:	____
Performance/ Innovative profile:	add scores for:	b____
		e____
		h____
		i____
		o____
		p____
		q____
		v____
	TOTAL:	____

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ADDITIONAL APPLICATIONS

This organizational culture test offers three additional opportunities which involve a greater understanding of what actually comprises organizational culture. First, if you find any of these terms unclear, a more thorough reading of books on organizational behavior would be most beneficial. To return to our travel analogy, one must learn the language before traveling into a new culture. Second, if you found little differentiation between the three categories (e.g. 24 for all three), you are dealing with an organization which lacks a strong culture with clearly defined values or you have taken too broad a view of the part of the organization you are analyzing. A final opportunity would occur if the culture test provided different results depending on which group takes the test. For example, if the supervisory personnel see the organization as predominantly Authoritarian/Bureaucratic and the upper-level management see the organization as Compromise/Supportive, then the source of some conflicts would be readily apparent. The organization lacks a cogent, well-defined culture and individuals at various levels will probably experience difficulty in knowing how "things are done."

Learning about organizational cultures for the professional communicator is easily as logical as learning to make a strong presentation or writing an excellent business letter. To assume that organizational theory can explain the variations within a given culture is to be much too naive concerning the behavioral tendencies of individuals. Once we learn the variations of cultures, however, the predictive capacity for our own actions is quite strong. There are no "quick and easy" means for learning cultures since there are numerous variations within all types of organizations.

CONCLUSION

This paper has presented culture as a fact of organizational communication. From three different perspectives, we can begin to draw some important concepts which can be specifically applied. First, we can see the difference between the excellent companies and the traditional view of organizations. The most striking difference is the open communication pattern within the excellent companies versus the top-down control and directed communication in the others. Second, we can divide the general types of cultures into the more traditional means of discussing organizational structure and decision-making processes. This division is the basis for the test just introduced. Finally, the study by Deal and Kennedy provides excellent insights into the behavioral aspects of the four types of cultures they studied. In their study, they were interested in excellent--as reflected by successful and productive behaviors--cultures. Their four sub-groups provide us with a useful balance regarding "how things are done" in these various organizations.

No one currently investigating organizational cultures assumes the study or understanding is easy in either theory or application. Since organizations are systems of individuals and sub-groups, there is a

richness which is difficult to classify. But, an awareness of the impact of culture on the communication within an organization is a prerequisite to being a successful traveler and not just a tourist.

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